

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 18 September 2023

**Title:** Events Report

**Contact Officer:** Venue & Events Officer

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### Background

Witney Town Council operates and manages outdoor spaces at the Leys, Burwell, Oxlease and St George's Field, which can be hired by third parties to host their own events. These make up a crucial part of the community engagement for the people of Witney and is intended to offer entertainment for the people of Witney throughout the year.

In addition, civic events are run throughout the year along with those at the Corn Exchange which are for the benefit of the Community. This report provides an update on those which have taken place so far, those ahead and those where further decisions are required of the Council.

### Current Situation

The Council is currently in the middle of the external events it runs and supports. So far in 2023 the Town Council has welcomed the following:

- **Hatwell's May Fair - 17<sup>th</sup> – 21st May, The Leys** (annual event)
- **Witney Pride - Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May, The Leys** (annual event)
- **Witney Music Festival - Friday 9<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June, The Leys** (annual event)

The Witney Music Festival is supported by an annual partnership agreement and grant of 10K by Witney Town Council, the object is to showcase local talent at the Music Festival in the form of a well-attended event for the people of Witney and the surrounding area with a strong emphasis on promoting local talent.

Feedback on this years' event was provided by the event organisers, with thanks to the Town Council without who's support the event wouldn't have been able to go ahead. A request has been made of the Council regarding the provision and management of a disabled area and toilets which incurred an unexpected cost of approximately £5,000; this area was managed by 'Vehicles for Change' in 2023.

Members should consider the feedback and details of the disabled area provided as **Appendix A** to this report and whether the town council takes on the management/payment for the area.

- **OPA Play Day - Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August**, (annual event)

An annual free children's play day organised and run by the Oxfordshire Play Association. This year held on Oxlease, the location changes on a yearly basis to allow easy access for attended in

different areas of Witney. This is a free to attend event targeting the children of Witney. A feedback report outlining the event in August is attached as **Appendix B**.

- **Oxford Playhouse Outreach Tent 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> July, The Leys**
- **Witney Carnival - Saturday 8th July, The Leys**
- **Witney Feast 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September, The Leys**

As we move into Autumn, the number of events that require outdoor spaces is reduced due to the changing weather and the potential for damage to the outdoor spaces.

- **Circus Ginett 16<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> October, The Leys**
- **Remembrance Sunday - 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023, Market Square, War Memorial**

This is an annual civic event run by Witney Town Council. This will be the second year the Council has organised and run proceedings in a non-covid year since the Royal British Legion advised they were no longer in a position to do so. Please see an Open Letter from the RBL, NALC and the LGA regarding Council's facilitating remembrance services, dated August 2023 on this link,

[https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLGA/bulletins/365d4c9?utm\\_source=MEMBERS&utm\\_campaign=cc649fc1c3-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_06\\_08\\_03\\_15\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_206970988f-cc649fc1c3-379841558&mc\\_cid=cc649fc1c3&mc\\_eid=e1bc150b66](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLGA/bulletins/365d4c9?utm_source=MEMBERS&utm_campaign=cc649fc1c3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_06_08_03_15_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_206970988f-cc649fc1c3-379841558&mc_cid=cc649fc1c3&mc_eid=e1bc150b66)

Officers are in the process of finalising the arrangements for this years' service, a verbal update will be provided to Members at the meeting.

- **Christmas Lights Switch on -24<sup>th</sup> November, Market Square-High Street**

A Rotary club event, facilitated and financially supported by Witney Town Council, a large gathering in the Market Square, with choirs, music, food and more.

- **Advent Fayre -26<sup>th</sup> November, Corn Exchange**

This a free event aimed at the children of Witney, organised and run by Witney Town Council staff with the support of Councillors on the day. It is funded by Witney taxpayers and is therefore not published more widely as the event would be unmanageable and massively oversubscribed. It offers various craft tables, face painting as well as the opportunity to meet Father Christmas in his Grotto.

Due to the popularity of this event in 2022 and similar ones for the jubilee/coronation, officers are exploring the possibility of booking free timeslots throughout the day for the crafts and Santa via the Council's venue booking provider, Eventbrite; this is due to overcrowding/health & safety issues. Other considerations could include restricting the number of adults entering with children and having a separate buggy storage area in the café. The event, which usually runs from 11am-3pm, would need to be slightly longer to accommodate a maximum number of attendees – morning and afternoon sessions with a break for lunch would also allow for numbers disperse and provide a break for helpers. This, however, may reduce the number of children through the door.

Please note it is not possible to run this event without Councillor support. Members are encouraged to contact the Lead Officer to advise of their availability.

## **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

## **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The Council must ensure all events, whether run by the Council or a third party are run safely, inclusively, and professionally for Witney residents. Difficult choices have to be made which balance these concerns against the budgets/constraints of the Council, so the events occur.

## **Financial implications**

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The Council provides a grant of £10,000 annually towards Witney Music Festival.
- Additional funding of £5,000 for 2024 will need to be sought if the Council agrees to the above request.
- All other items have/are dealt with within agreed budgets.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to:

1. Note the calendar of events, likely to be repeated in 2024 and,
2. Note the feedback from Witney Music Festival 2023 and,
3. Consider the request from Witney Music Festival regarding the disabled area at the Festival in 2024 and,
4. Note the feedback from the Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA) and,
5. Note the verbal update on the 2023 Remembrance Service and,
6. Note the potential change to proceedings for the 2023 Advent Fayre and,
7. Consider whether they are able to assist between 10am-5pm at the Advent Fayre on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> November to help with the event.